

Roads in Pond Settlement and Along the River Road

Pond Settlement to Pitcairn Town Line

By Linda Perry ... Vice-president of the Edwards Historical Association ... February 8, 2006

Posted April 5, 2012

A first for the settlement around the two ponds was the establishment of Rich Thayer's Auto Shop in 2000. There had not been a commercial enterprise in the area in many years. The settlement had consisted mostly of private homes and several camps lining the shores of the Jones Pond and Smith Pond (aka Soft Water Pond). Some of the camps have become year around homes.

His business is located across from the former Pond Settlement schoolhouse, now the home of Steven Wolf. After the closing of the school, it was converted into a house by John and Beverly Wood Towne. It is remembered that some of the teachers in the district were Lawrence Shene, Lina Hall, Edna Hughes, Minnie Harrington, Ruth McFerran and Blitha Bullock Javall.

It is recalled that before the days of easy transportation to any of the larger stores, Luke Fenton had a general merchandise store at his residence. This store featured open barrels of flour, crackers, and pickles among other common items available for the neighbors who walked to patronize his establishment. Luke not only had merchandise for sale, but his store was a friendly location for community gatherings to exchange the local news and pass some time before going back to the daily chores.

One of the well-known families was that of Alvin and Effie Hall. They had a large number of children and they lived in a large house near where Rich Thayer's Auto Shop is now. Many descendants of this family still live in the area as well as being scattered throughout the United States. The house is no longer standing, having burned at Christmas time in 1956 when the Erwin "Sonny" Hall family lived there.

Another family in the settlement was that of John Lumley. He is the only known English immigrant to Edwards who came from Antigua in the West Indies via Canada. Mr. Lumley supported his family by doing horseshoeing. In other words, he was a farrier, an important occupation in the days of horses used for work and transportation.



The "Chard" Smith farm, located on the flat heading toward Pitcairn, above the small body of water known as Smith or Soft Water Pond, was considered a fairly good-sized farm in its day. This farm required much manual labor so the Smiths employed farm workers throughout the year rather than just at harvest time.

A fatal accident remembered by the Jones family of the area happened 17 December 1896 on Smith Pond while a group of young people was having a holiday skating party. My grandfather's brother, Charles Madison Jones, age 22, skating near the edge of the pond, fell forward and the sharp end of a broken branch of a tag alder projecting from the ice punctured his jugular vein. He called for the help of his skating companions and began to run to the Smith house where he was loaded into a sleigh, taken home. There he was put in a downstairs bedroom where

the family applied dry flour to staunch the flow of blood, as it was the only remedy they knew. However, he died a short while later. Howard Whitford was one of the skating party and said the path from the pond to the Smith house was covered with blood where Charlie ran, and then was dragged, to the house. The ice skates Charlie wore that fatal evening were in the Jones family until recently.

A news item gives a graphic account of the accident, which happened just a week before Christmas "æœSouth Edwards, Dec.22, 1896. One of the most shocking deaths that had transpired in this section the last fifty years took place on the evening of the 17th inst. A party of young men and boys were assembled on Smith's pond for the purpose of skating and playing goal, among whom was Charlie Jones, son of David A. Jones of the Pond Settlement. While playing goal he was pursued in hot haste by Silas Wood and Ed Whitford in order to "get his tag" which caused young Jones to run near the shore of the pond, when he tripped and fell, striking his neck upon a projecting snag, piercing the jugular vein. He sprang up quickly as Whitford was about to place his hands upon him, and said, "Boys, I am bleeding to death", while at the same time the blood was spurting profusely from his neck. He then turned and with the aid on either side by Whitford and Wood, succeeded in skating to the head of the pond, a distance of 30 rods, marking his course by a trail of his own life's blood. While on his way he said, "Take me home" three times, and then said, "Take me to Frank Smith's". On arriving at the head of the pond he took off his hat placing it on the ground, then stooping, took off his boots and ran up the hill towards Smith's house with Whitford in pursuit. When he got near the fence he staggered and would have fallen had not Whitford caught him and held him up the best he could until he got him over the fence where he fell to rise no more. Whitford and a young man by the name of Graham then carried him up to Smith's house and with the aid of Smith put him in Graham's buggy and took him home, a distance of about a mile, where he breathed but a few minutes. Charlie Jones was the pet of his father's family." (Graham was probably Billy Graham ... from Kermit Jones)

Charles M. Jones in a signed portrait done posthumously by Brigham L. Webb in 1898. Picture is property of Kermit Jones in 2006.



Smith Pond can be seen from the Pinney Cemetery located a short way from the Smith farm. The first religious leader of South Edwards, Isaac Bannister, is buried in this cemetery.

The Sykes farm is across the road from the Pinney Cemetery. It is well known for its maple syrup production. For decades, every spring Robert and Frances Sykes made maple syrup and now their grandson, Duane and his wife, Tammy Sykes continue the tradition. Robert Sykes was the last Justice of Peace for South Edwards.

Another tragedy in this area happened in the late 1960s. The large family of Ernest Peck lived in the house now owned by Richard Gibbs. Mr. Peck was working under his jacked up car when the jack tipped over allowing the car to fall onto him. The weight of the vehicle caused fatal internal injuries to Mr. Peck leaving the family without a husband and father.

Jones Pond Road

The Jones farmhouse and barn are among the older buildings of the community. The barn was built before the present house, which was built in 1849 and was the second house built on that property. (The former house stood behind the present house and was used for other purposes after the second house was erected). At the time the barn was built the farm was owned by James Noble. When D. Jones purchased the property it was owned by J. Noble's widow and children. The farm was being run by a son, Benjamin Noble, who left the area to pursue a career working for as a streetcar conductor.

David A. Jones purchased the property on 9 Feb 1885, but didn't move his family to the farm, permanently, until late in 1890 when his wife, Alida, was dying of consumption. Her baby, Harold A. Jones, was nearly six months old at the time, and was never to know his mother as she died in February 1891. He was raised by his older brother, "Lin", and stepmother, Lavina, because his father had died when he, (Harold) was a small boy.

As an adult Harold built a house at the crest of the hill above Jones Pond where he lived with his wife and children. My mother was the oldest of his children. For a time she and her husband, my father, Jay Bridgeland, lived in this house with their family. Later the house became vacant and burned in 1983 when it was struck by lightning. There was never a deed for this house to separate it from the farm.

By following the dirt road around the curve by the Jones house, one comes to what was originally the Laidlaw house, made of fieldstone, and decorated over windows and doors with sandstone from Potsdam. Margaret Jones Wood, older sister of Harold, and her husband, Silas ("Siley") Wood, lived there and farmed it until the late 1950s.

Another tragedy of the area happened on the Laidlaw farm. A grandson of Siley and Marge Wood, Bruce LaPlante, age 13, was driving a cutoff vehicle known as a "doodlebug" around the farm in August 1962 when he misjudged the space when going through a gate and drove into a gate post, striking his head causing fatal injuries.

Jones Pond was a favorite swimming place for the neighborhood and much of Edwards community when my parents were growing up, and when I was small. I can remember it being filled to capacity with people and their vehicles on hot summer days and evenings. However, as with so many activities made possible by the generosity of landowners, the public did not treat the Pond with respect and the Jones family, eventually, was obliged to close it to everyone.

Some of the early families at the Pond were: Jones, Laidlaw, Noble, Van Ornum, Kentfield, Wood and VanAtter. Today will be found households of: Jones, LaPlante, Kerr, Whitford, Clesi, Mazuroski.

River Road

The River Road is a long, extended town road that connects Route 58 near Edwards village with Pond Settlement at the opposite end. At the turn of the century to the 1900s it was fairly sparsely populated. There have been few businesses located on the road, but two known were a cooper shop (made barrels) and a cobbler shop (made/repairs shoes), both near Jones Pond. Alfred Webb had a sawmill near the entrance to Rice Road and June Chapin now owns it.

The Chapin farm, situated approximately the mid-part of the road has been a working farm for many years. They were well known for their production of maple syrup and raising corn to sell to the community. Arnold Chapin, son of Aubrey and Joyce Chapin, who are retired, but live on the farm, now operates it.

The district schoolhouse was next to the Chapin farm and in the mid to late 1920s my mother was a student in the school and Edith Chapin, mother of Aubrey, was the teacher. The school, listed as the Harmon school, is now standing vacant.

Beyond the Chapin farm there used to be a house, on the same side of the road, in which Ward Stammer lived. It is now gone.

An ARC (Association for Retarded Children) house was established in the fall of 2004 in the former home of the Phelps family, then the home of the Southwick family located near the entrance to the abandoned Cotton Road. Some of the residents attend church services at South Edwards on occasion.

Just a mile or so down on the opposite side of the road, is the trailer home of Ray Norman. His wife, Alice, who is deceased, was one of the individuals to take a stand against the 760 KV line when it was being put through the north country. The Normans raised rabbits at one time.

At a place which stands above the river, there was a home in which a William Backus lived and then Marion Rice and her family lived there. Later Myrle Chapin and his wife and baby lived there. One night after the family had retired the house burned with the family still in their beds.

Closer to the Pond is the Gates Cemetery, which was donated to the locality by the Gates family for use of the residents of the neighborhood. These lots, which were to be reserved for the use of families residing in the River Road neighborhood, were not to have a fee attached to them. Recently the inmates of the Gouverneur Correctional Facility replaced the fence surrounding the cemetery.

Just before the entrance to the Jones Pond Road is the home of Roland and Rita Wood. They have a taxidermy business, which is operated in a separate building.

The families, which have lived, or are now living, along this road can be found by looking on the available maps of Edwards of different eras.

Rice Road

The Rice Road is a side road off the River Road just after the Webb saw mill. In the 1910 federal census it was listed as the Webb Road. The Bruce Ward family lived on this road when their daughter, Irene, was born. Members of the Chapin family also called it home. When the Abner Rice family lived on this secluded, wooded road the farm on which they resided became known as the Rice Farm. Karl and Rosemary French lived on Rice Road when they were newlyweds. The Bill French family lives on the road now. Beyond the French residence was where Bruce Ward lived and at the end of the road was the farm of David Harmon. In addition to the names already listed, other families have been Robert Brown, Jr., Seba Brayton, and the Maurice Rohde family.

© 2015
